

Education Committee Public Hearing
Wednesday, March 3rd, 2021
Yamuna Menon, Connecticut Charter Schools Association
Re: Senate Bills 948, 949, 886

Good day Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony with you today. My name is Yamuna Menon of the Connecticut Charter Schools Association, and we represent the 11,000 mostly low-income, minority kids attending Connecticut's 21 public charter schools in 10 cities and towns, as well as the 6,000 names currently on waitlists for public charter schools across the state.

As you are aware, in Connecticut, we implement a separate and extremely unequal public education funding system, one that continues to leave our 11,000 mostly low-income, Black and brown kids severely underfunded. That's why we are here to support the bills on today's agenda that propose to address education funding and racial equity, and include addressing the deeply inequitable system of funding our state's public charter schools, such as Senate Bills 948, 949 and 886.

These proposals include important core principles that should be followed for all public school students, including kids in public charter schools. Students should be equitably funded in a unified funding formula that accounts for their learning needs, regardless of where they come or their background or family circumstances. This is why we support applying the ECS formula to public charter school students and all public school students.

Taking this step would enact a single, unified funding formula and equitably invest in all our public school students. Because we must center public school funding to be student focused so that all kids are included and equitably funded regardless of where they live, how much their family makes, or what public school they attend.

For additional context, charter school students - who are 64% low-income and 80% Black and brown - represent the very students that the weights of the ECS were intended to serve - students who are low-income, in concentrated poverty and have additional learning needs like English Learners. But because the ECS formula currently only applies to traditional public schools, they don't have access to this funding.

Moreover, these kids achieve at exceptional levels and charter schools have continued to deliver great results for kids for years.

The data tells the story: on average charter school students continue to meet or exceed performance targets compared to their district peers, they continue to receive numerous local and national awards and accolades, and perhaps most importantly, have risen to the occasion and deliver on the promise of a great education for their mostly low-income, Black and brown kids in the wake of a global pandemic that has had devastating consequences on our state's education system.

Again, as you consider the proposals before you, we ask you to rectify the long-standing funding inequities found in having a complex public education funding system of 11 different formulas and put all kids, including kids in charter schools, into the ECS formula. **Apply the ECS formula to public charter school students and all public school students.** Because we must do everything we can to get our children the education and future they deserve. We have a moral and constitutional obligation to provide our most in need children with the quality educational opportunities many of us are privileged enough to take for granted.

Thank you for your time today, and for your consideration.